

## **FAITH IN THE FACE OF FIRE** **(Daniel 3)**

### **I. They would not bow (Daniel 3:1-12).**

A. We do not know how long it was after the conversation between Daniel and King Nebuchadnezzar found in chapter 2 and these events.

B. Some believe that it was quite soon.

1. It is not hard to see the similarities between what King Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream and the statue he created.

2. He had been told that his kingdom was the head of gold (Daniel 2:38).

3. It could be that he felt that if he created something that was 90 feet high with a 9 foot base that it would be a way of making the statue he saw great.

4. There is also evidence that there was a rebellion around 594 BC that was put down and it may be that this statue was a way to force unity upon the people.

a. The wording of the text shows that many different languages were represented.

b. What better way to force unity than through a common object of worship?

C. There is some belief that it was about 15 years later but there is no real evidence for this idea.

D. Whatever the time line, King Nebuchadnezzar ordered that all of his leaders of the provinces come to the plain of Dura and, at the appropriate time when the music was played, bow down to the created image.

1. This is why the three Jewish friends, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, were there.

2. They were over the affairs of the provinces belonging to King Nebuchadnezzar.

3. Daniel was over the capital city and that may be why he was not present.

E. At the set time, all the instrument players blew or plucked the strings of their instruments and everyone bowed down.

1. However, there was not total unity.

2. At least three men did not bow down.

F. We are told that the Chaldeans brought word to King Nebuchadnezzar that the three friends did not bow down.

1. Again, from chapter 2, the Chaldeans were a class of astrologers that had enjoyed a close relationship with the king till Daniel and his three friends came on the scene.

2. What we have is a case of political envy.

a. These men were upset their positions had been usurped by these monotheistic Jews.

b. They lost prestige and prominence and they wanted it back.

G. The three friends were charged with:

1. Not respecting the king by disregarding his command;

2. Not worshiping his gods;

3. Not bowing down to the image.

H. What we see is that these three friends would not bow.

## **II.They would not budge (Daniel 3:13-18).**

- A.The fact that these three refused to obey flew all over King Nebuchadnezzar.
  - 1.Notice that it says in his rage and in his fury.
  - 2.He is beside himself, but not as mad as he is going to get.
- B.He has them called before them and then asks them if it was true that they didn't bow down.
- C.However, he doesn't wait for them to answer.
  - 1.He gives them another opportunity to bow down.
  - 2.He tells them that if they are ready, he will get the music played again and they can bow down.
  - 3.If they don't, they would be burned.
- D.Notice what he says at the end of verse 15 (Daniel 3:15).
  - 1.Who is the God that shall deliver you?
  - 2.King Nebuchadnezzar has not learned.
  - 3.He had seen the power of God to reveal dreams and interpretations.
  - 4.He failed to be completely impressed by the power of God.
- E.The answer given by the three friends is powerful and uplifting (Daniel 3:16-18).
  - 1.In essence they said you don't even have to play the music because we know what we are going to do.
  - 2.God is able to deliver us.
  - 3.The God you don't think is powerful enough is able to deliver us.
  - 4.Even if He doesn't it, we aren't going to bow down.
- F.Here we see that the young friends would not budge.

## **III.They would not burn (Daniel 3:19-30).**

- A.Here we see the full fury of King Nebuchadnezzar.
  - 1.It says that his visage was changed against the three men.
  - 2.The anger was so great in him that his facial expressions were contorted with rage.
  - 3.No doubt, no one ever stood up to him like this and refused to do his bidding.
- B.He was so angry that he commanded that the furnace be heated seven times its normal temperature.
  - 1.It seems that this was either a brick kiln or a furnace created to heat the metal for the image King Nebuchadnezzar had built.
  - 2.It was probably one that was very large and had an opening at the top in which the material was placed and an opening at the bottom in which the coal or wood to heat the fire was placed.
  - 3.The Bible is full of examples of iron being used well before this so there is no argument to be made that this was impossible.
- C.Also, burning as punishment was also known.
  - 1.King Nebuchadnezzar is said to have burned to false prophets to death (Jeremiah 29:21-22).
  - 2.Achan was stoned to death and then burned after the battle of Ai.
  - 3.Certain cases of sexual immorality called for the offender to be burned (Leviticus 20:14; 21:9).
- D.The fire was increased and the three men were taken to the fire and pushed

in by valiant soldiers of Babylon.

- 1.The three friends were pushed in with their clothes on them.
- 2.The only problem was that the fire was so hot that it killed those that threw them in the fire.

E.At this point, the king saw something that amazed him.

- 1.He saw four men walking around in the fire unharmed.
- 2.He said that the fourth one looked like a son of the gods, or like the Son of God.
  - a.There is debate about what this means.
  - b.Some believe it was an angel, while others believe it was the 2<sup>nd</sup> Person of the Godhead.
  - c.Whoever it was, he was from God and he delivered the young friends from harm.

F.The king called to them and commanded them to come out of the furnace.

G.They did before all the Chaldeans and the king and other of his men, without any harm and did not even smell like smoke.

H.This caused King Nebuchadnezzar to bless God and to make a decree that nothing should be said negatively about their God.

I.These three young men would not burn.

#### **IV.We must beware.**

A.We must beware to not forget the power of God.

- 1.King Nebuchadnezzar asked who is the God that could deliver these men.
- 2.Our God is able.
- 3.We serve the God of the universe and He is able to deliver us in time of temptation if we will hold to Him as these three did.

B.We must beware that we never serve men rather than God.

- 1.The three friends knew the result of serving the king's god would separate them from their God.
- 2.The apostles, facing dire circumstances, told the Sanhedrin Council, "we must obey God rather than man".
- 3.No matter what the result may be of our disobedience to man, our faith in God must shine through knowing that death as a Christian is far better than life as a violator of God's will.

C.We must beware to disobey man in the right way.

- 1.These three disobeyed the king in the most respectful way possible.
- 2.They were not violent or boastful against the king.
- 3.They simply said God was able but if not they were not going to be disobedient.
- 4.A lot of things in this last election have alarmed me.
- 5.Some have called for open violent rebellion.
- 6.Christians can have no part in that.
- 7.We are told to honor the king and be obedient to the powers of government (Romans 13; 1 Peter 2).
- 8.We don't take up arms to fight against our own government.

D.We must beware the power of our words and actions.

- 1.Think of how powerful the actions of these three men were.
- 2.Their disobedience led to the glorification of God by a heathen king.

3. On the other hand, if they had bowed, God would not have been glorified.

4. When we go along with something, by taking an oath in a meeting, or bowing down to something, we must understand what we are saying.

5. Anything to which we take honor from God and give to men is something in which the Christian must not take part.

E. We must beware that sometimes suffering is necessary.

1. These men suffered for their faith.

2. We should expect nothing less (2 Timothy 3:12).

3. If we are going to be right with God in all things, we are going to suffer at times.

4. It may not be to the level of these three young men, but we will suffer nonetheless.

The 3 main points came from an outline by Wayne Dunnaway, but the body of the sermon is original.